

Az Div o Dad ('Of Demon and Beast') Acquisition for the Victoria & Albert Museum

Kaveh Golestan's artistic career has produced one of the most important photographic archives documenting the social and political history of Iran during the second half of the twentieth century. The *Az Div o Dad* series by Golestan is a rare and historically significant series of Polaroid works, the majority of which have remained unseen since 1978.



Kaveh Golestan, *Untitled* (*Az Div o Dad* series), 1976.
 Internal dye diffusion transfer print. Vintage Polaroid,
 [93mm x 88 mm].

© Kaveh Golestan Estate, Courtesy of Archaeology of the
 Final Decade.



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A group of Golestan's *Az Div o Dad* Polaroids will be exhibited in New York this year at the Metropolitan Museum of Art (4 October 2021–30 January 2022); a different group will be exhibited in London next year at Tate Modern (25 February–29 August 2022). These are part of the joint and travelling *Surrealism Beyond Borders* exhibition. Golestan is the only Iranian to be showcased in the exhibition, and the catalogue will feature works from this series.

V&A Museum Acquisition

The V&A would like to acquire a set of ten of Golestan's Polaroids for their collection. We would like to assist in the fundraising efforts to place these works in the V&A's collection, one of the largest and most important photography collections in the world, and preserve Golestan's legacy as a historically significant photographer. £20,000 has already been generously donated towards the acquisition by an individual patron: the remaining balance to raise is £55,000.

“My colleagues in the Middle East section... share my view that these would be a great addition to the V&A's collection since they are interesting examples of international Surrealism, demonstrate an innovative use of the Polaroid form and show another side to Golestan's better-known practice as a photojournalist.”

— Dr Marta Weiss, Senior Curator, Department of Photography, V&A

As the first historical collection of photography, the V&A has been acquiring photographic works for its world-renowned collection since 1852. The collection now comprises over 800,000 works, with a major display of the world's most influential modern and contemporary photographers on show.



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Artist Background



Kaveh Golestan (1950–2003) was an influential Iranian pioneer of documentary photography. His photographic practice has hugely informed the work of future generations of Iranian artists. Besides numerous socially motivated projects such as the Citadel of Shahr-e No in the 1970s, Golestan documented many major historical events including the conflict in Northern Ireland, the Iranian revolution, the Iran-Iraq War, and the Gulf Wars. In 1979 he was awarded the Robert Capa Gold Medal for "superlative photography requiring exceptional courage and enterprise abroad". Whilst on an assignment in Iraq, Golestan stepped on a fatal landmine in Kifri in Northern Iraq. He died on 2 April 2003.

In 1976, Golestan created a series of innovative and striking Polaroids by moving collaged fragments in front of an open shutter over long exposures. The process created fantastical and surrealistic works that blend fairytale and history, appropriating found photographs and images from the 19th and 20th centuries. The collages depict visions of anthropomorphic, beast-headed uniformed and nude figures set against natural and architectural backgrounds with references to modern and Qajar-era histories. These works open a window onto an experimental side of Golestan's practice, which has received little critical exposure to date.

As a medium, the Polaroid is an important photographic format, which was used by artists including David Hockney, Helmut Newton, Ansel Adams, Andy Warhol and Andrei Tarkovsky over a short period of time. The Polaroid company ceased to exist in 2008.

The Photography Centre

Works from Golestan's photographic series will be on show this year in *Epic Iran* at the V&A Museum. The exhibition, organised with the Iran Heritage Foundation in association with The Sarikhani Collection, explores 5,000 years of Iranian art, design and culture, beginning at the dawn of history in 3200 BC.

Although all acquisitions across the V&A have been put on hold until the end of the financial year due to the pandemic, they have committed to exhibiting the *Az Div o Dad* Polaroids during *Epic Iran* in the museum's Photography Centre, if successful in acquiring these works in a timely manner.

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entirely to photographic pioneers from across the globe, and home to the Royal Photographic Society's expansive collection, exploring photography from the invention of the medium to the present day.



The Bern and Ronny Schwartz Gallery, Room 100, Photography Centre. © Victoria and Albert Museum, London

Previous Museum Acquisitions

Archaeology of the Final Decade (AOTFD) facilitated the acquisition of works from Golestan's *Prostitute* series for Tate Modern. The works were displayed for twelve months at Tate Modern within the museum's permanent collection (2017–2018). The display marked the first time in the museum's history that a room of the permanent collection was dedicated to an Iranian artist.

AOTFD also facilitated Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA)'s acquisition of a set of ten Polaroid works from the *Az Div o Dad* series in 2016. These were exhibited as part of *In the Fields of Empty Days: The Intersection of Past and Present in Iranian Art*. The works were published in the exhibition catalogue alongside an essay by Vali Mahlouji.